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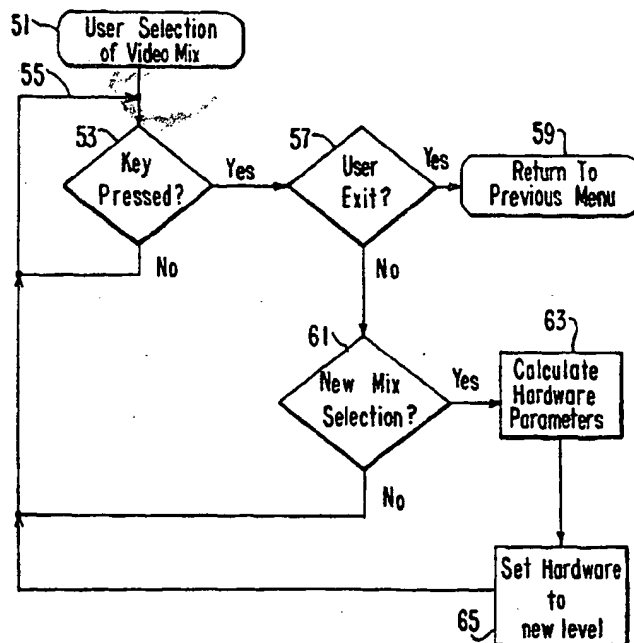
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(71) Applicant: PREVUE INTERNATIONAL, INC. [US/US]; 7140 South Lewis Avenue, Tulsa, OK 74136-5422 (US).		Published With international search report.	
(72) Inventors: MARSHALL, Connie, T.; 2991 South Woodland Road, Muskogee, OK 74403 (US). LEMMONS, Thomas, R.; Route 2, Box 332-47, Coweta, OK 74429 (US). ALLISON, Donald, W.; 3411 S. 132 E. Avenue, Tulsa, OK 74134-4033 (US).			
(74) Agents: MORGAN, Robert, C. et al.; Fish & Neave, 1251 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020-1104 (US).			

(54) Title: VIDEO MIX PROGRAM GUIDE

(57) Abstract

A system interactively controlled by a TV viewer remote superimposes portions of a scroll program guide over a basic programming signal for display on the viewer's display screen. A tuner has an input for receiving TV signals in a plurality of cable channels and an output for passing a signal of any selected one of said channels. A computer has an input for receiving any of a plurality of control signals from the TV viewer remote and an output for controlling the tuner to pass the signal of the selected one of the channels in response to one of the plurality of control signals from the TV viewer remote. The computer receives and stores a scroll input picture image signal containing local program guide data and generates a scroll output picture image signal consisting of at least a portion of the scroll input picture image signal. A combiner superimposes output picture image signal over the passed signal to provide a display signal for input to the viewer's display screen. The computer is responsive to control signals from the remote to cause the combiner to change the weight of the output picture image signal in relation to the passed signal.



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VIDEO MIX PROGRAM GUIDEBACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to interactive video communications and more particularly concerns viewer controlled channel programming guide displays.

Programming guide information is presently displayed to the home TV viewer in a non-interactive scroll on a single channel dedicated to programming guide information.

When the home viewer selects the programming guide channel, viewing of the channel previously selected is interrupted. While the viewer executes best judgment to when to make the change, key portions of the program on the previously selected channel may be missed. This is especially probable in cases of live programming. It is also especially irritating to the viewers not in possession of the controller.

It is, therefore, an object of this invention to provide a process and in-home scrolling hardware by which a home viewer may interactively control a channel programming guide. Another object of this invention is to provide a process and in-home scrolling hardware in which the scroll can be simultaneously superimposed on and displayed with the programming of any channel accessible to the home viewer. Another object of this

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invention is to provide a process and in-home scrolling hardware by which a home viewer may control the comparative weight of the programming guide or superimposed signal in relation to the basic programming signal over which it is superimposed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the invention, a system interactively controlled by a TV viewer remote control transmitter displays a scroll program guide superimposed on the normal programming displayed on any channel accessible to the viewer's display screen. A tuner receives TV radio frequency or optical transmission signals in a plurality of cable channels and passes a viewer usable signal of any selected one of the channels to a signal combiner. A computer receives any of a plurality of control signals from the TV viewer remote control transmitter. It also controls the tuner to pass the viewer usable signal of any selected channel in response to one of the control signals from the TV viewer remote control transmitter. It also receives and stores a scroll input picture image signal containing local program guide data and generates a scroll output picture image signal consisting of at least a portion of the scroll input picture image signal. The signal combiner combines the viewer usable signal of any selected channel from the tuner with the output picture image signal from the computer to provide a display signal with the program guide display superimposed over the channel programming display for input to the viewer's display screen. The computer is responsive to a control signal from the remote to change the weight of the superimposed signal in relation to the base or normal programming signal.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent upon reading the following detailed description and upon reference to the drawings
5 in which:

FIGURE 1 is a block diagram illustrating a preferred embodiment of the hardware of the interactive scrolling program guide;

FIGURE 2 is a flow chart illustrating the
10 basic process and options of the video mix capability of the interactive scrolling program guide;

FIGURE 3 is a representation of an interactive scrolling program guide menu display;

FIGURE 4 is a representation of an
15 interactive scrolling program guide display in a video mix mode;

FIGURE 5 is a representation of the interactive scrolling program guide display in a solid or one hundred percent programming guide condition
20 relative to the base signal;

FIGURE 6 is a representation of the interactive scrolling program guide display in a ninety percent programming guide condition relative to the base signal;

FIGURE 7 is a representation of the interactive scrolling program guide display in an eighty percent programming guide condition relative to the base signal;

FIGURE 8 is a representation of the
30 interactive scrolling program guide display in a seventy percent programming guide condition relative to the base signal; and

FIGURE 9 is a representation of the interactive scrolling program guide display in a sixty

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percent programming guide condition relative to the base signal.

While the invention will be described in connection with a preferred embodiment and process, it will be understood that it is not intended to limit the invention to that embodiment or process.. On the contrary, it is intended to cover all alternatives, modifications and equivalents as may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Turning first to Figure 1, the components of the interactive scroll program guide are illustrated. A computer 11 having a command information receiver, preferably an infrared or radio frequency receiver 13, provides a control signal 15 to a tuner 17 and a picture image signal 19 to a digital video board 21. The tuner 17 converts or demodulates radio frequencies or optical transmissions to a signal usable by the viewer to output a signal 23 selected from a plurality of signals 25 input to the tuner 17 from the cable source (not shown), typically frequency division multiplexed video, audio and data signals transmitted via a coaxial cable, over-the-air radio frequencies or fiber optics. The digital video board 21 converts digital data into a video signal. The tuner output or base programming signal 23 has superimposed thereon a scroll information picture image signal 27 from the digital video board 21 in a genlock signal combiner or overlayer 29. The combined scroll and TV picture signal 31 is then displayed on a video signal display device such as the display screen 33 of the viewer's television. The combiner 29 permits the viewer to select the weight of the scroll information picture

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signal 27 in relation to the base programming signal 23. The viewer sends commands to the receiver 13 to control the operation of the computer 11 by the use of a remote control transmitter, preferably an infrared or radio frequency transmitter 35. The computer 11 is based on microprocessor and may utilize random access (RAM) and/or read only (ROM) memory. The software necessary to operate the microprocessor may be embedded in the device or downloaded via the cable system to the device.

The above described interactive scroll program guide components operate in response to the control of the computer 11. As shown in FIGURE 2, while the home viewer is watching programming presented on his display 33 in response to the tuner 17 feeding any basic program signal 23 from the input selections 25 to the genlock combiner 29, the viewer may opt to simultaneously view the programming guide scroll available to the combiner 29 from the computer 11 through the digital video board 21. The viewer simply presses a predetermined key on the remote 35 to select the program guide display as is illustrated in FIGURE 3. As shown in FIGURE 3, the program guide nomenclature (Prgm Guide) will appear on the screen between arrows indicating upward or downward menu access to the possible choices in the program guide routine. By use of the up and down arrows on the controller 35, the program guide menu can be manipulated to the "video mix" condition, illustrated as step 51 in the routine of FIGURE 2. The visual appearance of the viewer's display 33 in the "video mix" condition is illustrated in FIGURE 4. Upon "user selection of video mix" 51, the computer 11 routine inquires as to whether or not there has been a key pressed 53 requesting that the weight of the program

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guide signal 27 be changed in relation to the basic programming signal 23. If the answer to this inquiry is "NO", routing proceeds through a path 55 to continue the "key pressed" inquiry 53. If the response to the

5 "key pressed" inquiry 53 is "YES", the routine continues to a "user exit" inquiry 57. If the viewer has opted to exit the video mix routine, a "YES" response to the "user exit" inquiry 57 will result in a "return to the previous menu" 59. If, however, the

10 response to the "user exit inquiry" 57 is "NO", the routine continues to a new mix selection inquiry 61. If the response to the "new mix selection" inquiry 61 is "NO", the routine returns via the route 55 to the original "key pressed" inquiry 53. If the answer to

15 the "new mix selection" inquiry 61 is "YES", the routine proceeds through the calculate hardware parameters step" 63 and the "set hardware to new level" step 65, at which point the genlock combiner 29 automatically performs these functions to establish the

20 weight of the program guide signal 27 superimposed by the genlock combiner 29 over the basic programming signal 23. When the hardware is set to its new level 65, the routine continues through the path 55 to the "key pressed" inquiry 53 to determine whether the

25 viewer has again selected a different percentage of signal mix.

FIGURES 5 through 9 illustrate the solid or one hundred percent video mix, ninety percent video mix, eighty percent video mix, seventy percent video

30 mix and sixty percent video mix, respectively, the percentage indicating the weight the programming guide signal 27 superimposed on the basic programming signal 23.

If the video mix routine is exited and later

35 reselected, the weight of the programming guide signal

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27 will automatically be the weight last opted by the viewer.

Thus, each individual viewer will be provided with a scroll program guide in which the home viewer
5 can interactively determine whether the program guide scroll should be displayed and, if so, its weight relative to the basic program data.

Thus, it is apparent that there has been provided, in accordance with the invention, a video mix
10 program guide that fully satisfies the objects, aims and advantages set forth above. While the invention has been described in conjunction with specific embodiments thereof, it is evident that many alternatives, modifications and variations will be
15 apparent to those skilled in the art and in light of the foregoing description. Accordingly, it is intended to embrace all such alternatives, modifications and variations as fall within the spirit of the appended claims.

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What is claimed is:

1. A system interactively controlled by a remote control for superimposing portions of a program guide over a television program for display on a display screen comprising:

a tuner having an input for receiving television signals corresponding to a plurality of television channels and an output for providing an output television signal corresponding to a selected channel of the plurality of channels;

a computer having a control signal input for receiving control signals from the remote control, a tuner output for directing the tuner to tune to the selected channel in response to a control signal from the remote control, a program guide input for receiving program guide data, the computer generating a program guide output signal corresponding to at least a portion of the program guide data; and

circuitry for superimposing the program guide output signal over the output television signal to provide a display signal for input to the display screen, the computer being responsive to control signals from the remote control to cause the superimposing circuitry to change the weight of the program guide output signal in relation to the output television signal.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein, when the computer increases the weight of the program guide output signal, the display signal generated by the superimposing circuitry causes the display screen to decrease the perceived transparency of the displayed portions of the program guide, thereby causing the displayed television program to appear less visible through the displayed portions of the program guide.

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3. The system of claim 1, wherein, when the computer decreases the weight of the program guide output signal, the display signal generated by the superimposing circuitry causes the display screen to increase the perceived transparency of the displayed portions of the program guide, thereby causing the displayed television program to appear more visible through the displayed portions of the program guide.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the computer is responsive to control signals from the remote control to activate and deactivate the program guide, the computer setting the weight of the program guide output signal upon activation of the program guide to the weight set at the time of the most recent deactivation of the program guide.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the program guide output signal comprises a scroll program guide output signal for causing the display to display a scrolling program guide.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the display screen displays a value representing the relative weight of the program guide output signal with respect to the output television signal.

7. A method of superimposing portions of a program guide over a television program for display on a display screen comprising the steps of:

receiving television signals
corresponding to a plurality of television channels;

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providing an output television signal corresponding to a viewer selected channel of the plurality of channels;

receiving program guide data;

generating a program guide output signal corresponding to at least a portion of the program guide data; and

superimposing the program guide output signal over the output television signal to provide a display signal for input to the display screen, the program guide output signal having a viewer selectable weight in relation to the output television signal.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein, when the weight of the program guide output signal is increased, the generated display signal causes the display screen to decrease the perceived transparency of the displayed portions of the program guide, thereby causing the displayed television program to appear less visible through the displayed portions of the program guide.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein, when the weight of the program guide output signal is decreased, the generated display signal causes the display screen to increase the perceived transparency of the displayed portions of the program guide, thereby causing the displayed television program to appear more visible through the displayed portions of the program guide.

10. The method of claim 7 further comprising the step of setting the weight of the program guide output signal upon activation of the program guide to the weight set at the time of the most recent deactivation of the program guide.

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11. The method of claim 7, wherein the program guide output signal comprises a scroll program guide output signal for causing the display to display a scrolling program guide.

12. The method of claim 7, wherein the display screen displays a value representing the relative weight of the program guide output signal with respect to the output television signal.

13. A system of superimposing portions of a program guide over a television program for display on a display screen comprising:

means for receiving television signals corresponding to a plurality of television channels;

means for providing an output television signal corresponding to a viewer selected channel of the plurality of channels;

means for receiving program guide data;

means for generating a program guide output signal corresponding to at least a portion of the program guide data; and

means for superimposing the program guide output signal over the output television signal to provide a display signal for input to the display screen, the program guide output signal having a viewer selectable weight in relation to the output television signal.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein, when the weight of the program guide output signal is increased, the generated display signal causes the display screen to decrease the perceived transparency of the displayed portions of the program guide, thereby causing the displayed television program to appear less

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visible through the displayed portions of the program guide.

15. The system of claim 13, wherein, when the weight of the program guide output signal is decreased, the generated display signal causes the display screen to increase the perceived transparency of the displayed portions of the program guide, thereby causing the displayed television program to appear more visible through the displayed portions of the program guide.

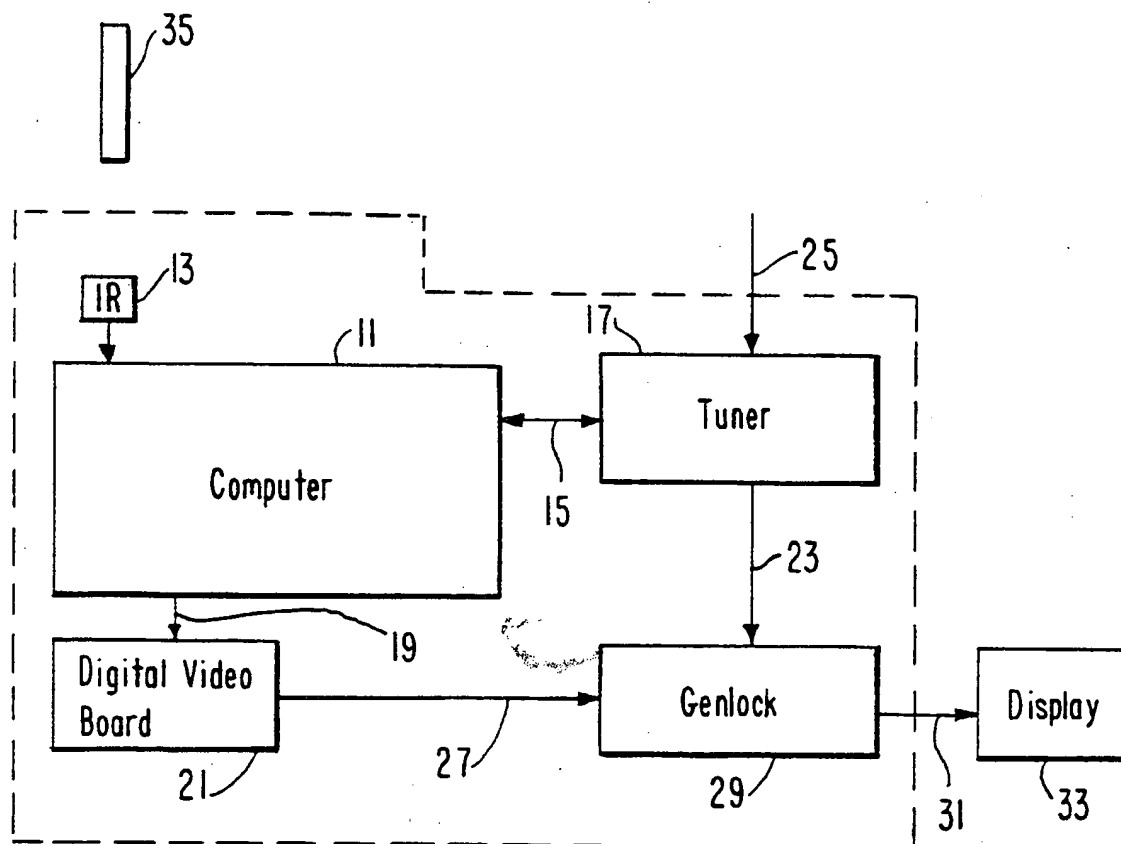
16. The system of claim 13 further comprising means for setting the weight of the program guide output signal upon activation of the program guide to the weight set at the time of the most recent deactivation of the program guide.

17. The system of claim 13, wherein the program guide output signal comprises a scroll program guide output signal for causing the display to display a scrolling program guide.

18. The system of claim 13, wherein the display screen displays a value representing the relative weight of the program guide output signal with respect to the output television signal.

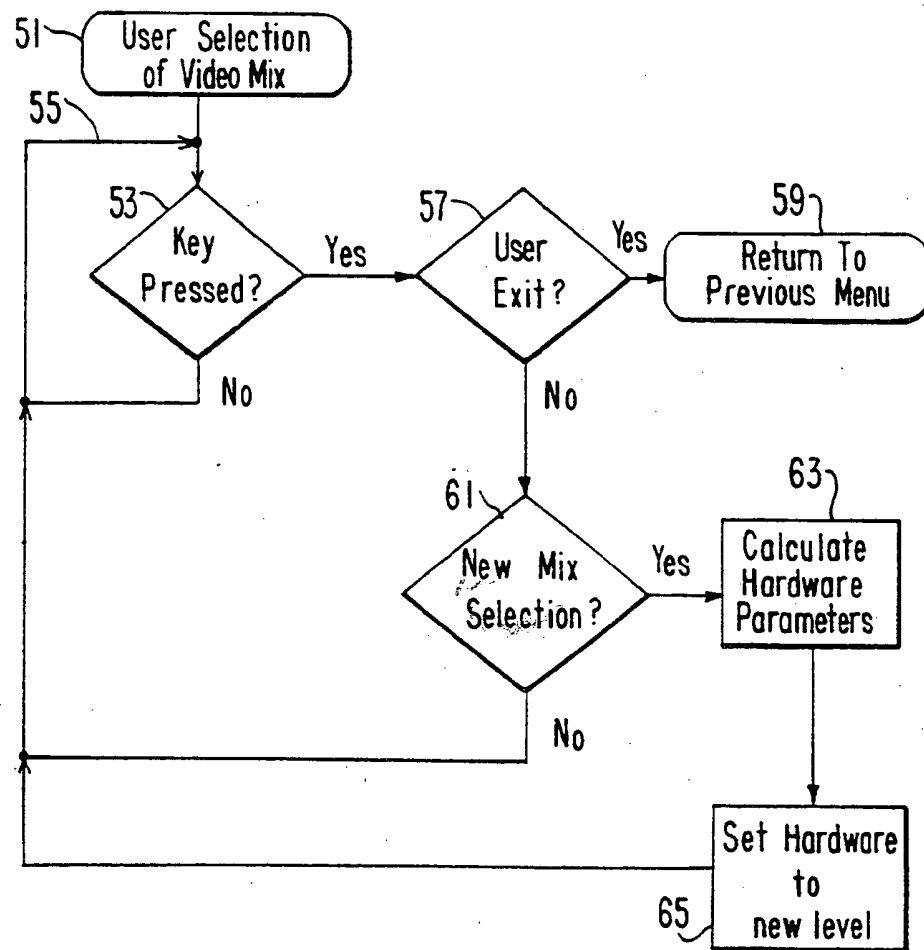
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FIG. 1



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FIG. 2



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FIG. 3

PREVUE	Thur. Feb. 24 4:30		
Prgm. Guide	Grid	4:00 PM	THU
Feb. 24	4:00 PM	4:30 PM	
2 KJRH	CURRENT AFFAIR	EMPTY NEST	
3	UNCLE ZED (CC)	FEATURES (CC)	
4 DIS	KIDS INCORPORATE	MICKEY MOUSE CLUB	
5 KOKI	ANIMANIACS	BATMAN THE ANIMATED SER	

FIG. 4

PREVUE	Thur. Feb. 24 4:30		
Video Mix	Solid	4:00 PM	THU
Feb. 24	4:00 PM	4:30 PM	
2 KJRH	CURRENT AFFAIR	EMPTY NEST	
3	UNCLE ZED (CC)	FEATURES (CC)	
4 DIS	KIDS INCORPORATE	MICKEY MOUSE CLUB	
5 KOKI	ANIMANIACS	BATMAN THE ANIMATED SER	

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PREVUE	Thur Feb 24 4:30		
Video Mix	100%	4:00	PM THU
Feb 24	4:00PM	4:30PM	
2 KJRH	CURRENT AFFAIR	EMPTY NEST	
3	UNCLE ZED (CC)	FEATURES (CC)	
4 DIS	KIDS INCORPORATE	MICKEY MOUSE CLUB	
5 KOKI	ANIMANIACS	BATMAN THE ANIMATED SER	

FIG. 5

FIG. 6

PREVUE	Thur Feb 24 4:30		
Video Mix	90%	4:00	PM THU
Feb 24	4:00PM	4:30PM	
2 KJRH	CURRENT AFFAIR	EMPTY NEST	
3	UNCLE ZED (CC)	FEATURES (CC)	
4 DIS	KIDS INCORPORATE	MICKEY MOUSE CLUB	
5 KOKI	ANIMANIACS	BATMAN THE ANIMATED SER	

PREVUE	Thur Feb 24 4:30		
Video Mix	80%	4:00	PM THU
Feb 24	4:00PM	4:30PM	
2 KJRH	CURRENT AFFAIR	EMPTY NEST	
3	UNCLE ZED (CC)	FEATURES (CC)	
4 DIS	KIDS INCORPORATE	MICKEY MOUSE CLUB	
5 KOKI	ANIMANIACS	BATMAN THE ANIMATED SER	

FIG. 7

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FIG. 8

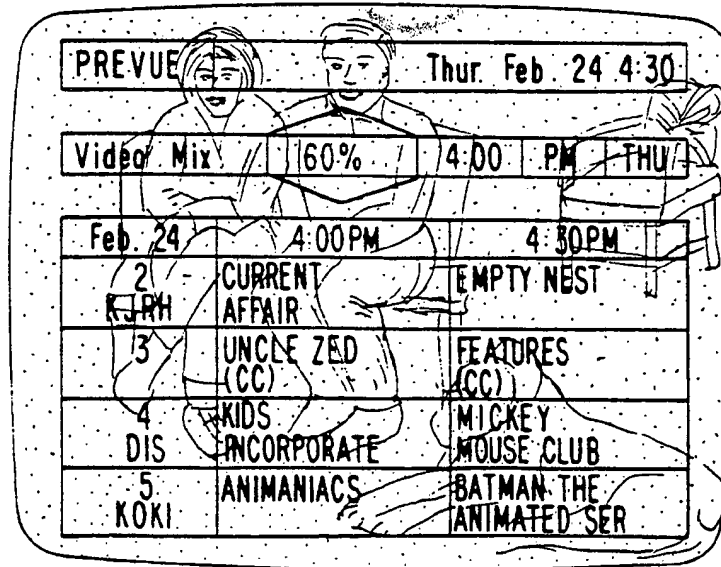
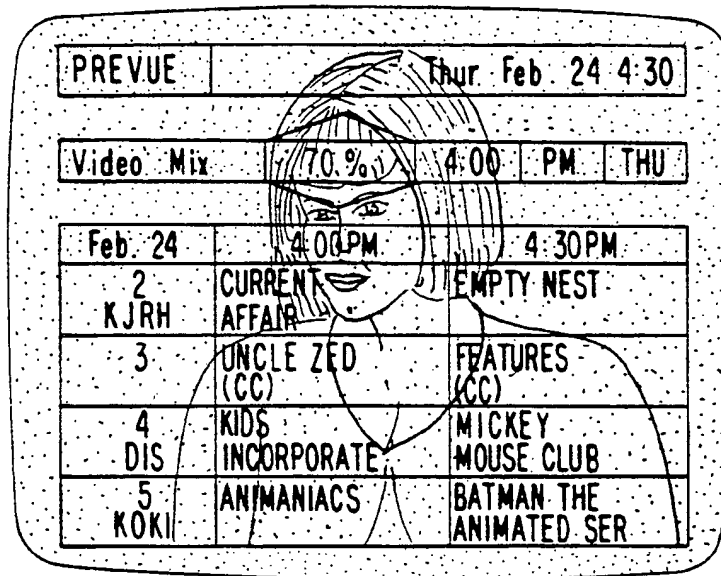


FIG. 9

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/US 95/05306

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 H04N5/445 H04N7/087

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 6 H04N

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO,A,90 15507 (RIGHT HEMISPHERE PTY LTD) 13 December 1990 see page 4, line 22 - page 5, line 35 see page 11, line 27 - line 33 see figures 1-4 ---	1-18
A	GB,A,2 217 144 (TOKYO SHIBAURA ELECTRIC CO ;TOSHIBA AUDIO VIDEO ENG (JP)) 18 October 1989 see abstract see page 1, line 21 - page 3, line 2 see page 6, line 2 - page 12, line 1 see figures 1-9 --- -/-	1,4,7,13

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

4 August 1995

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NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
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Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

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Van der Zaal, R

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

information on patent family members

International Application No
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